Spring CAR CARE '08

May 2008

A Special Supplement to Elizabethton Star

CAR CARE

Motor oil facts, not friction

(MS) — Many people don't know how to select motor oil that will help them get optimum performance out of their car. People often just select the oil their father used, or they may take the suggestion of a counter person at an auto parts store who may not know any more about cars than they do.

There are meaningful differences in motor oils and choosing the right one can have a major impact on how well your car runs. Selecting the right oil is the quickest and cheapest way to improve your car's performance and reliability.

Two components determine how well motor oil will perform in your car. One factor is the base oil, and the other is the combination of chemicals (additives) that are added to the base oil.

Base oils

The two primary types of base oils used are mineral and synthetic. Mineral oils are by-products of refined crude oil. Refining helps reduces the impurities but leaves molecules of all shapes and sizes. Synthetic oils are man-made compounds where molecules are all the same size and shape; consequently, synthetic oil has a less friction and performs significantly better than mineral oils.

There's been sizable growth in the use of synthetic oils over the years. In fact, synthetic oils are often the factory fill in many new performance and luxury cars.

Additives

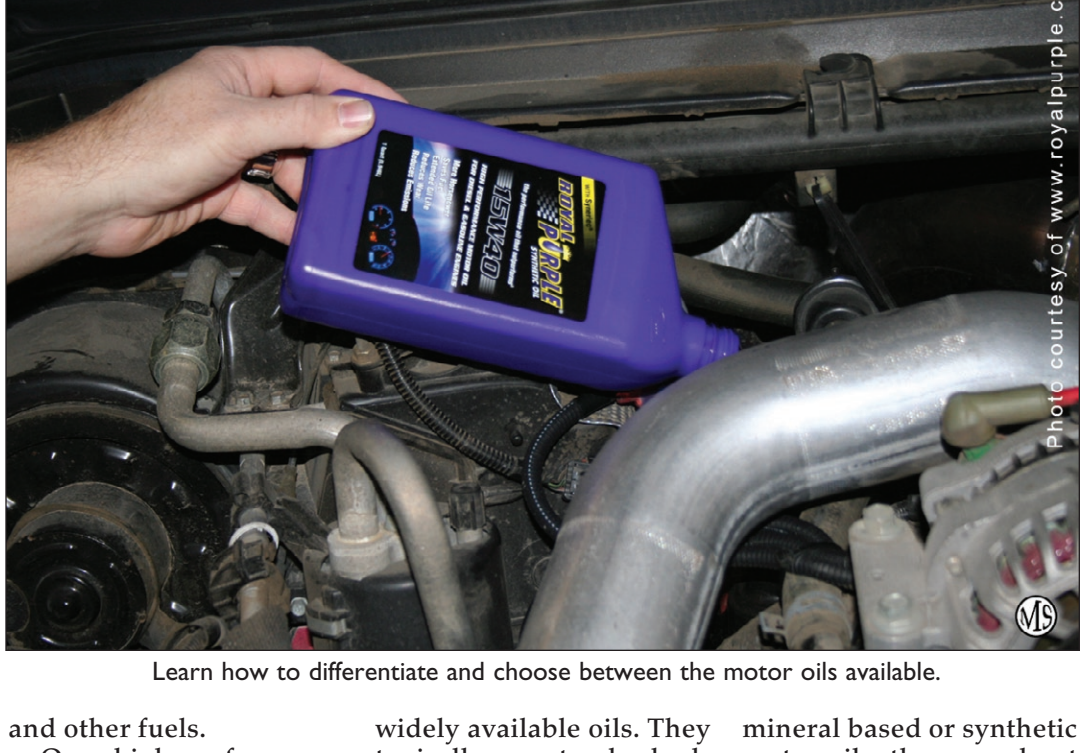
Regardless of the base oil used, chemicals must be added to give motor oil the characteristics needed to do its job. Typical additives that may be added to base oil include detergents to reduce the formation of residue, defoamants to deter absorption of air, anti-wear agents, antioxidants and others.

Although additives are typically only 15 to 25 percent of the make up of motor oil, they can impact a lubricant's performance much more than the base oil. For instance, mineral based motor oil with a very good additive package can easily outperform synthetic motor oil with a mediocre additive package.

There is no easy way for a consumer to determine the quality of motor oil's additive package. Price is often an indicator of quality since the more advanced additive technologies cost more to produce. Performance is the ultimate measure of additive package quality.

Advances in lubrication

Some of the biggest technological advances in lubrication are now coming through advancements in chemical additives. These breakthroughs have been developed by a handful of companies that specialize in high-performance lubricants, as opposed to major oil companies whose primary focus is refining and selling crude oil by products like gasoline and other fuels.



Learn how to differentiate and choose between the motor oils available.

One high-performance lubricant company, Royal Purple, has developed lubricants that outperform both leading mineral oils and other synthetics. Their oil has been proven in numerous independent tests to dramatically reduce engine wear, increase horsepower and torque, and reduce fuel consumption and emissions. Cars using their oils can also go further between oil changes, saving the owner time and money, and reducing the impact on the environment. More information about their products is available at their Web site www.royalpurple.com

How to Choose

Mineral-based (conventional) motor oils. These are the cheapest and most widely available oils. They typically use standard additive packages that provide minimum levels of performance and protection.

Synthetic motor oils. These man-made oils are more expensive that mineral-based oils but are still widely available. Their performance advantages come predominantly from the synthetic base oil used. They have a longer service life and offer some improvements in protection. They typically use the same additive packages found in mineral-based oils.

High-performance 'speciality' synthetic motor oils. These motor oils are the most technologically advanced oils. Although they significantly outperform mineral based or synthetic motor oils, they are about the same price as standard synthetic motor oil. They are typically only available through auto parts stores and select oil change centers. These oils primarily differ in their use of more advanced, proprietary additive technologies.

Still confused? For a used car with little life left in it, stick with the cheap mineral-based motor oil. For a car you plan to keep for a few years and want to get a little better performance from, you should at least upgrade to synthetic motor oil. To get the most performance out of your car, truck or RV, or to protect a vehicle you really care about and want to last, upgrade to a high performance motor oil.

Hot weather the cause of car battery troubles

(NAPSI) — Here's some hot news for car owners: Summer is the season for major car-battery problems.

Virtually everyone who's been through a harsh winter is familiar with the annoyance of a "dead" battery and the need for a jump start. So it may surprise many to know that it's heat, not cold, that shortens battery life.

According to the Car Care Council, the average life of a battery is 3-1/2 years — even shorter in warmer climates. That's because excessive heat and overcharging are the two main reasons for shortened battery life.

Heat causes battery fluid to evaporate, which damages the internalstructure of the battery. A malfunctioning component in the charging system, usually the voltage regulator, allows too high a charging rate. That's slow death for a battery.

Statistics from a recent National Car Care Month inspection campaign show battery cables, clamps and terminals were found to need maintenance in 17 percent of the vehicles and 9 percent of the batteries were not properly held down.

To get the most life out of a battery, the Car Care Council suggests the following:

- Be sure the electrical system is charging at the correct rate; overcharging can damage a battery as quickly as undercharging.
- If your battery is the type that needs to be topped off, check it regularly, especially in hot weather. Add distilled water when necessary.
- Always replace a battery with one that's rated at least as high as the one originally specified.
- Keep the top of the battery clean. Dirt becomes a conductor, which drains battery power. Further, as corrosion accumulates on battery terminals it becomes an insulator, inhibiting current flow.

Removing bumper stickers

Bumper stickers are relatively easy to remove. Try to pick a warm, sunny day for the project and slowly and gently peel them off. If a summer day is too much to hope for, use a hairdryer or heat gun to simulate sunny conditions. The older the bumper sticker is the more slowly you will need to peel it. In some cases it can be useful to pull the sticker flat and gently lift it that way. You are less likely to rip it.

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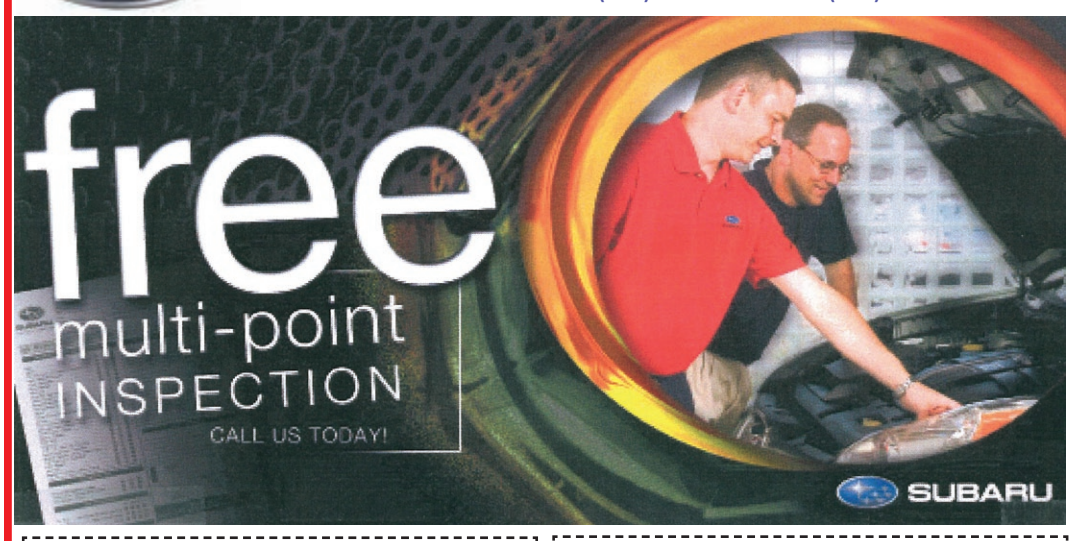

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Gas saving tips

With the constant increase in the gas prices, it is necessary to save gas. People have used various methods to save and conserve gas.

These tips include some general tips, some related to engine maintenance and how to drive economically while some are related to the kind of gasoline we should buy. Listed below are some gas saving tips that you should use to conserve gas and save money.

The most important gas saving tip is to avoid warming up engine your engine for too long, even when it is cold outside. This will result in more gas being lost. You should make sure you do not stop and restart your car often, since this also wastes gasoline.

When you are about to stop the vehicle you should not rev it unnecessarily, this just wastes fuel. When you are starting the vehicle you should slowly accelerate, not push the gas pedal to the floor to reach the quickest possible speed in the shortest amount of time. Slow, steady, acceleration ensures proper fuel consumption and helps the carburetor function at its best.

The second most important gas saving tip is to drive at a constant speed. You should take care to follow all the specified speed limits so that you don't stop and speed up consistently. When traveling on highways you should keep your windows closed. This will reduce the drag caused by the air. Always drive intelligently thinking about the area you are driving in. Try to reduce your speed, or accelerate slowly.

Another important tip is the gasoline that you put in your car. Make sure you are using the proper octane levels for your vehicle. You will find this information in your owner's manual. If you use a level that is higher in octane than recommended by your car manufacturer you are wasting money.

It will not make your car run any better or increase the amount of miles you get per gallon. Did you know the best time to fill your car with gasoline is during the coolest part of the day. It is a fact that the gasoline is densest when it is cool.

Car maintenance is another important tip when it comes to conserving gas. Gas saving tips include maintaining engines, tire pressure, removing excess weight from the car so to cause less drag. Using proper engine oil and tuning the engine so that it performs well also goes a long way in conserving gas.

You can use alternative roads, or a shorter more direct route when traveling. This can help you to save gas.

Even parking correctly can help you to save gas. If you park in a way that makes you move your car back and forth, you use more gas. It is the little things you don't think about that waste gas.

Air Conditioners and heaters decrease fuel efficiency by increasing the load on the engine and should be avoided when possible.

Finally the best possible way to conserve gas is to use either the public transport or the car pool as this would lead to less cars being driven on the road and less fuel being used.

Getting your car ready for summer travel

After battling months of snow and icy roads, your car is undoubtedly in desperate need of some serious tender-loving care. Follow this spring checklist to ensure that your car is tuned up and spring-ready.

REMOVE YOUR WINTER TIRES / ROTATE ALL SEASON RADIALS — If you have winter tires, it's finally time to store them. If you don't have winter tires, it's equally important to have all season tires rotated. Driving in the winter weather can be hard on tires. Rotating tires regularly extends their life and will give you better braking and handling. This is especially important when you're driving on wet roads that are typical during spring.

WIPER BLADES CHECK — Your wipers work hard all winter wiping away dirt and debris on your windshield. It is a good idea to replace them in the spring to be prepared for summer showers.

BRAKE CHECK — After the cold winter be sure to check your brakes. One of the warning signs is brake noise, including excessive grinding, squealing, screeching or chatter.

CLEAN THE UNDERBODY — In addition to washing the exterior, be sure to spray the underbody and underneath the rear and front bumpers to rinse away any salt build-up which can lead to erosion and rusting. Use a high-pressure sprayer or garden hose for best results.

Interior clean-up — Vacuum, vacuum, vacuum! Be sure to throw away any unwanted garbage that has hibernated under your seats over the winter. And now is the time to store your winter car mats in the garage.

APPLY A PROTECTANT — Any vinyl surface including the dashboard, seats and the steering wheel are susceptible to cracking, sun damage and fading — be sure to apply a protectant at the beginning of the season and touch-up regularly.

CHANGE OIL — If you've been using a thinner oil for winter (i.e. 5W30) change back to 10W30 for warmer weather. But make sure you stick to the manufacturer's recommended oil type for your car!

CHECK ALL FLUIDS TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE TOPPED UP — In the winter months, fluids are easily depleted as your engine works harder in the colder weather. Make sure to double-check all the car's fluids regularly.

WASH YOUR CAR — Just like a good maintenance program prolongs the life and performance of your car, all vehicles regardless of the finish (clear coat, acrylic, enamel, etc.) require regular washing throughout the year. To preserve your car's shine and protect the surface, wax your vehicle once it has dried completely.

Make your car really shine with a wash job

(MS) — For years the most reliable way to tell if any wax was still on your car's surface was by careful observation of the water beads after a rain. If the beads were high and small, the wax coating was either fresh or most of it was still there. Large flatter beads meant the wax coating was wearing off and no beading meant the wax was gone.

Most people are under the false impression that if they see any water beading on their car, their wax is still creating the same gloss it did when first applied. Actually, shine diminishes each time a car is washed, driven, or exposed to rain, snow or ice. Simply drying the paint with a cloth after washing can reduce gloss. Don't be fooled by some of today's synthetic waxes, as some will continue beading water even though shine has dulled.

If you want to keep your car really glossy with that just waxed look, you should reapply whatever product you use when gloss diminishes. Never depend on water beading to indicate the condition of the shine.

Here's a simple way to determine the condition of gloss on your vehicle. Just wash and dry the hood. Apply wax to one small section of the hood. Now compare gloss in the waxed and the unwaxed areas by looking at your face's reflection. If you can see your face more clearly in the waxed section and it looks better overall, then only waxing the entire car will restore maximum gloss.

The telltale sign of a good wax is when the color of your car appears so vivid and deep that the paint actually looks wet. Such is the look many car-show aficionados aim for with their own vehicles.

While veterans of the car-show circuit know the ins and outs of which wax to use, that might not be the case for most other drivers. Unknowingly, some car owners might be applying a wax that actually dulls a car's finish. Products that claim to wax, clean and remove scratches from paint contain abrasives, which could possibly be removing a little of your car's paint with each application.

New cars, especially, should not be exposed to waxes containing abrasives. An abrasive-free wax, however, is meant to be applied to clean car paint to create a very smooth and shiny appearance while protecting against nature's damaging elements. It's the ideal choice for new cars fresh off the lot or even cars that have just come out of the car wash.

An important ingredient to look for in an abrasive-free wax is Carnauba, an all-natural extract derived directly from the leaves of a unique palm tree. Accustomed to battling harsh weather conditions in the rain forests of Brazil, Carnauba provides the ideal protection for your car's paint job.

All products that contain Carnauba are not necessarily what you're looking for. Carnauba comes in many different grades, some of which are more durable and provide a longer-lasting finish. Lower grades of Carnauba may not give the shine you expect.

Finding an abrasive-free wax that utilizes the best grades of Carnauba can be difficult. Since 1979, Malm Chemical Corp. is the popular choice among car show veterans, who reportedly pay up to $125 for an 8-ounce jar of high-grade Carnauba paste wax. Along with all-natural Carnauba, Malm's special formula includes additional unique ingredients, which blend together to yield the best results for your vehicle. Malm also produces a concentrated liquid Carnauba that many users boast can wax an entire vehicle with less than half an ounce.

Malm's products are sold at a limited number of new Porsche dealers. Check with the manager of parts at a dealership near you.

Driving economically — check your insurance rates

(NAPSI) — If you knew the gas station across town was selling gas for 20 cents cheaper than the station a half mile from your house, odds are you'd drive over there to save money filling up your tank.

In fact, a survey of 1,000 people by Progressive reveals that 92 percent would drive out of their way to save 20 cents on a gallon of gas.

Did you know that spending a few minutes shopping for car insurance could save you hundreds?

Why not take a little time to see what's out there when it comes to auto insurance?

"Comparison shopping is important when it comes to auto insurance. Rates from different companies can vary by hundreds of dollars," said Progressive's Jim Haas.

"Shopping around doesn't take long. Call your independent insurance agent and find out if you can save."

Independent insurance agents can compare products and rates from multiple insurance companies and put together a customized insurance plan for you.

Here are a few things to consider:

• Has your life situation changed recently? If you've recently moved, gotten married or had a birthday, mention it to your agent. You may be eligible for discounts.

• Is your car getting older? You don't always need the same level of coverage on older cars as newer ones. If you drive an older car, an agent can advise you on what level of coverage makes sense. Raising your deductible on comprehensive or collision coverage could save you money, too.

Watch for windshield splats on your next road trip

(NC)-You've probably never paid that much attention to the bugs that splat on your windshield and front bumper every time you take a road trip. But, maybe you should. Dr. Mark Hostetler, a professor of wildlife and conservation and author of "That Gunk on Your Car: A Unique Guide to Insects of North America," calls himself a "splatologist" who has made a mission out of detecting bug guts.

Here is a breakdown of what some splats are caused by (not for the squeamish).

- Red splats are typically mosquitoes. Only female mosquitoes inject blood, so a red stain on your windshield offers an important clue.

- Yellow or creamy spots that slide upward are typically butterflies or moths. They leave fluttering scales or powder.

- The smallest splats are usually biting midges, the dreaded black flies or "no-see-ums."

- Splats that glow are fireflies.

- Loud splats are usually cockroaches or beetles because they have the hardest shells.

As disgusting as it sounds, you probably have had every one of the nasty critters land on your windshield, even more during spring and summer travel. Prestone Bugwash windshield cleaner is designed to remove those nasty, stubborn bug splats. "Carbohydrates found in insect parts cause the biological deposits to stick to windshields on impact," said Megan Currie, Honeywell Consumer Products Group product manager. "This patented formulation penetrates biological deposits and helps remove them."

The formula digests the deposits so they are easily removed from the windshield by the washer fluid and wipers.

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Tire pressure

Research data has shown that the under-inflation of a vehicle's tires by just 10 pounds per square inch reduces the fuel economy of the vehicle by 3 percent.

The easiest gas saving tip you never knew

With gas prices soaring above $3 a gallon and with higher prices expected during the coming busy summer months, there is respite in this desert of dried up wallets. One of the best gas-saving tips is something you can do in your own driveway, no expert required.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, under-inflation of vehicle tires increases the rolling resistance of those tires, and likewise decreases the fuel economy of vehicles because they have to work harder. Research data has also shown that the under-inflation of a vehicle's tires by just 10 pounds per square inch (psi) reduced the fuel economy of the vehicle by a noteworthy 3 percent.

So, in an everyday example, if the tires on a vehicle should be inflated to 35 psi and they are only inflated to 25 psi, instead of getting the manufacturer's suggested 20 miles to the gallon, the driver is only getting a mere 19.4 miles to the gallon.

Let's say you own that car with the 20 gallon tank; you should be getting 400 miles per tank. Instead of getting 20 miles per gallon, you are only getting 19.4 miles per gallon due to your under-inflated tires, which means you are only getting 388 actual miles out of that 20 gallon tank.

At $3 a gallon, you've just evaporated $36 by not having properly aired tires. If you fill up once a week, you've just wasted $144 that month alone.

How does a regular guy (or gal) check tire pressure? First by looking at the writing on the outside wall of your tires, your owner's manual, or the inside of your vehicle door jamb for recommended inflatable psi.

Next, going to Wal-Mart and parting with the $5 it costs for the air pressure gauge, which sometimes will even include instructions on its use! Air is usually free at your local gas station, and it only takes a few minutes to perform the routine check.

For the best results, check your pressures once a month, and listen to the money jingle in your pockets instead of hearing moths fly out of your wallet.

Car care checklist for summer

BETHESDA, Md. — Now that winter is just a memory, millions of Americans will take to the roads to enjoy the warmer weather. The Car Care Council reminds motorists that spring is the perfect time of year to make sure your vehicle is ready for the upcoming travel season.

Whether you're driving across the country or driving across town, the Car Care Council recommends checking the following vehicle components before embarking on your next trip:

EXTERIOR

— Wiper blades play an extremely important role in increasing visibility. Replace every six months or when cracked, cut, torn, streaking or chattering.

— Check the tires. A simple test to check tire tread depth is to insert a penny into the tread of the tire. If the top of Lincoln's head sticks out, your tires are starting to show signs of wear and should be replaced. Also check the tire inflation and inspect the tread for uneven wear, which could indicate the need for a wheel alignment. Also look for bulges and bald spots.

— Give your car a good washing from top to bottom. Use a product specifically made for automobiles. Always clean the tires and wheels before washing the body, and don't use the same mitt for both.

— If you find minor paint damage, cover the paint chips as quickly as possible. For a quick fix until you can get some touchup supplies, dab a little clear nail polish on the scratch.

— Spring is an excellent time for waxing, which not only protects the finish but also makes subsequent washing easier. Before proceeding, make sure there are no foreign particles on the paint.

UNDER THE HOOD

— A good rule of thumb is that a change of season equals a change of oil. Changing your car's oil and filter every three months or 3,000 miles, whichever comes first, will ensure that your car operates at peak efficiency.

Get a tune-up if necessary. As part of the 21st Century Tune-Up on today's modern vehicles, the following systems should be inspected: battery, charging and starting, engine mechanical, powertrain control (including onboard diagnostic checks), fuel, ignition and emissions.

— Check all fluids. There are several fluids that require attention, including engine oil, power steering fluid, brake and transmission fluids, windshield washer solvent and antifreeze/coolant. The antifreeze/coolant should be refreshed every two years.

— Check hoses and belts. A belt that fails can affect the electrical system, air conditioning and power steering, as well as the cooling system. Cooling system hoses may be deteriorating from within, so old hoses and clamps that appear to be in marginal condition may need to be replaced.

UNDER THE VEHICLE

— Spring is a good time to check the entire brake system, including brake linings, rotors and drums.

— Check the shocks or struts for signs of physical damage, such as leaking, rusting, or dents. Also be aware of the warning signs that you may need them replaced: vehicle rolls or sways on turns, front end dives when braking, rear end squats when accelerating, vehicle sits lower in the front or rear, a loss of directional control during sudden stops, and the vehicle bounces or slides sideways on a winding and rough road.

— If you notice any fluid puddles or stains under your vehicle, it is a good idea to have it inspected. There are several fluids that can leak from the vehicle including antifreeze/coolant, battery acid, brake fluid, clear water, diesel fuel, engine oil, gasoline, gear oil, power steering fluid, shock and strut fluid, transmission fluid and windshield washer fluid.

'Lifestyle car renting' — a new consumer trend

If you're getting ready to pack your friends or family into a rental car for a summer road trip, you're not alone. Weekend rental car reservations have been very strong this summer, reflecting a new consumer trend known as "lifestyle renting," according to Enterprise Rent-A-Car, the largest rental car company in North America.

"More and more, we're finding that our customers are matching the automobile they drive to special occasions," says Jill Lane, general manager and vice president of Enterprise. Lane notes there is an exceptionally strong demand for SUV, pickup, and minivan rentals over long weekends. "Today, renting a set of wheels is not unlike renting a tuxedo for a wedding," says Lane.

A recent survey of 1,800 North American drivers confirms this observation. The poll, conducted by Enterprise, found that people are renting vehicles other than the ones they own to satisfy lifestyle needs, from a long weekend getaway, driving the kids to a weekend baseball or soccer tournament, to celebrating a special night on the town.

The survey confirmed that the trend is being fueled largely by younger drivers between 21 and 30 years of age who tend to view their vehicle as an extension of themselves. These younger drivers are more likely than older drivers to say that their vehicles do not always meet their needs in terms of image, trunk space, seating capacity or reliability.

TIPS FOR THAT IDEAL RENTAL CAR EXPERIENCE

Brian Hampton, general manager and vice-president for Enterprise Rent-A-Car, offers some helpful tips for consumers in their quest for an ideal rental car experience:

TO GET THE BEST RATE

Many rental car companies offer weekend discount packages especially at local neighborhood locations. Ensure you book a large enough vehicle to accommodate both your passengers and their luggage. If you are interested in upgrading your rental car, you can often do so for a few extra dollars at the time of pick-up, if the vehicle is available.

Use the Net to compare rates and make reservations

A convenient way to compare rental car rates is to visit the Web sites of the rental car companies in your community. Rates at these sites are updated more frequently than those posted on travel web sites. Most rental car companies also take reservations over the Internet.

Ask if the rental car company will pick you up

For added convenience, some community-based rental car companies offer free pick up and return. This eliminates the need for you to arrange to have a relative or friend drive you to the rental office.

IF IN DOUBT, TAKE THE INSURANCE

Before renting a car check with your insurance broker to determine whether your personal auto insurance covers rental cars. Also verify the coverage offered by your credit card company before you rent a vehicle. If you are not covered, or if you're not sure about your coverage, take the optional Collision Damage Waiver coverage. The nominal cost will be a real bargain if you have an accident.

ALWAYS INSPECT THE RENTAL VEHICLE FIRST

Avoid subsequent disputes by inspecting the vehicle with the rent-a-car employee to assure that any pre-existing damage or scrapes is acknowledged by the rental car company before you drive away.

Safety comes first when traveling with children

Never place a child in a rear-facing car safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle that has an airbag.

The safest place for all children to ride is in the back seat in a restrained child car seat that is weight and age appropriate. Set a good example, by always wearing your seat belt. According to a study by the Air Bag Safety Campaign on recent seat belt use studies from 10 states, restraint use for young children was above 80 percent when adults were also buckled.

What to know when selecting a child car seat

If you are selecting a new child car seat for your summer trip, remember:

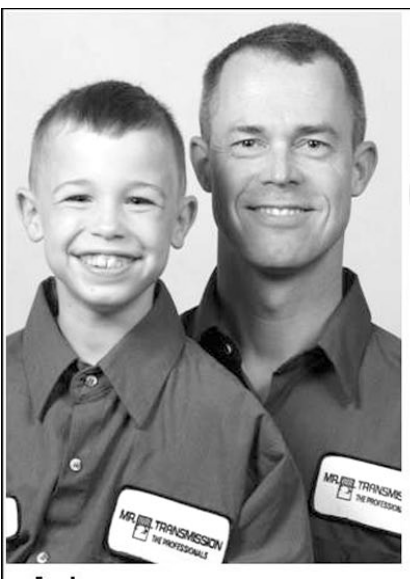
— Some models do have different features; select one that has the features that will allow you to use it correctly EVERY trip. Make sure to choose a car seat that has a good return policy in case it doesn't fit.

— Remember that each car safety seat is different so read and keep the instructions that came with your seat.

— The safest seat for your child is one that fits him/her well and fits in your car well. Make sure to choose the proper type of seat for your child. In general, the longer he or she can ride in a 5-point harness, the better.

— You should never purchase a used car seat. If it has been in a crash or modified in any way, it may not function and protect your child as well as a new child seat.

Your child should be buckled snugly into the vehicle. Ideally, you want the harness as tight as your child can ride comfortably, and the car seat coupled as tightly as possible to the vehicle with the seatbelt or LATCH system.



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CAR CARE

Should your car overheat, stall or idle roughly when you turn on the air condition, it could be a warning sign that your air conditioning is not working.

Don't let the heat scorch your car's AC

(NewsUSA) — During the hot summer months, a blast of cool air from your vehicle's air conditioner can provide much-needed relief against the sweltering heat and humidity.

Before hitting the road this summer, avoid a sticky situation by having an automotive technician inspect your vehicle's air conditioning system. The air conditioning system in your vehicle works by using a refrigerant to lower air temperature and carry away heat, which cools and dehumidifies the air flowing into the passenger compartment.

For the system to work properly, several key components, including the compressor, condenser, evaporator, valves and hoses need to be in tip-top shape.

Firestone Complete Auto Care recommends having your air conditioning system serviced at the beginning of the warm season, or according to the vehicle's owner's manual, to ensure the refrigerant level in your vehicle is adequate and all of the system components are working properly. Although air conditioning systems are typically very reliable, they can break down.

Air conditioner warning signs include:

—The AC system doesn't cool to the desired temperature.

—Loud noises when you turn on the AC.

—Water on the vehicle's floor mats.

—Unusual odors coming from the vents.

—The vehicle overheats, stalls, or idles roughly when you turn on the AC.

—The blower doesn't work when you switch on the AC.

—Your defroster doesn't work.

If you notice any of these warning signs, ask your service provider to perform an AC performance check. In many cases, inadequate cooling is caused when refrigerant leaks through worn seals or loose fittings.

Although air conditioning systems are resistant to leaks and contamination, they are not leak-proof. Over time, contamination or leaks can appear and affect the cooling performance of your air conditioner.

During an AC performance check, your technician will inspect the air conditioning components and refrigerant for leaks and performance to make sure your vehicle is ready for the warm summer months.

Your technician may also suggest you change your cabin filter, which removes impurities from the air. You should change your cabin filter according to the maintenance schedule in the vehicle's owner's manual.

Before hitting the road this summer, beat the heat by taking your car into your local automotive service center to have your air conditioner checked — especially if you have black leather seats!

Make for cleaner air

Get fuel when it 's cool. Refueling during cooler periods of the day or in the evening can prevent gas fumes from heating up and creating ozone. And that can help reduce ozone alert days.

Don't top off the tank. It releases gas fumes into the air and cancels the benefits of the pump's anti-pollution devices. So stopping short of a full tank is safer and reduces pollution.

Have fun! Ride your bike. It's a great way to travel and it can help you and the air get into condition. Vehicles on the road create more than 25% of all air pollution nationwide.

Repairing a tire yourself can save money

You're not sure if you hit a nail or ran through glass. What you do know it that your tire is definitely flat. It could be repaired at the mechanic's shop or you could save yourself the trip and expense and do it yourself.

The process can be a little time consuming, but once you know how to repair a flat you will never again be at the mercy of closed shops or stuck in the middle of nowhere. Taking the time to learn this essential maintenance process now will save a lot of time and hassle later.

The first thing you need to do is determine where the puncture is located. A quick way to do this is to submerge the tire in water and watch where air bubbles form. Obviously this area or areas are the place you need to concentrate on. Before the patch job can begin it is important to remove any foreign object that is stuck there. Pliers are a good tool for this step. Simply use the pliers to pull the object out in the same direction as the tire's tread. Being sure to go with the tread helps ensure that minimal additional damage is done to the tire.

Now is the time to prepare to patch the tire hole. Using a tire reamer clean the hole out from the inside of the tire. This will remove any dirt or oil that may later cause adhesion issues with the cement and patch. Place the patch centered over the puncture to be sure sizing is correct. Remove the patch and coat an awl with cement. Be sure to run the awl through the hole several times to be sure the cement is coating the damaged area adequately. Place a coat of vulcanizing cement on the patch and buffed area of the tire and allow to dry thoroughly.

Remember the awl is still through the hole. Apply a thin layer of cement to the stem of the patch and pull the stem through the hole. Once the patch stem is through the puncture cut the stem off almost flush with the outside of the tire's tread. The tire is now patched and there are a just a few more things to do before you are back on the road.

To finish up the tire repair job and to help make sure your tire problems are a thing of the past, take the time to complete a few preventative measures. One useful precaution is to take a look at your valve stems. If they look worn, old, or damaged it is a good idea to change them. Be sure they are the right length and diameter for your car's tires. Valve stems are important because not only do they function to retain valve core air retention, but they also keep moisture and dirt from getting inside the tire. Once you are assured that the valve stems are in good condition reinflate the tire. Using soapy water sprayed on the tire is useful to see if there are any leaks in the new patch, around valve stems, or the beads.

Having a flat tire is certainly an inconvenience, but some time and a little patience can have you back on the road with safe, road worthy tires.

A clean air filter will make for a better trip

(NC) — As allergy season arrives, experts everywhere are offering advice on how to avoid and combat pesky irritants such as pollen and dust.

What these experts sometimes neglect to address is the air inside your car.

"Canadians spend a lot of time in their cars and trucks. Family travel season is almost here and when planning your trip, you also need to plan for your family's comfort and health," said Megan Currie, Product Manager for Honeywell Consumer Products Group. "A dirty or clogged cabin air filter can lead to an unhealthy environment inside the vehicle and an unenjoyable trip."

Most drivers don't realize that the air inside their car can be more polluted than the outside air because of the more concentrated levels of contaminants that are continuously re-circulated inside the vehicle.

A FRAM Fresh Breeze® cabin air filter removes 98 percent of pollen particles and road dust from the air passing through the vehicle's ventilation system.

"It's a simple step to take to increase your family's comfort," said Currie.

Smells can affect mood faster than any other sense, and they can be distracting, especially while driving. In our daily travels, we are affected by a number of smells — from excessive air pollution to local oil refineries, landfills and farms. Studies show that the No. 1 odor people dislike is the smell of fish, which people often experience when driving near waterfronts. The FRAM Fresh Breeze cabin air filter absorbs odors from the air outside the car that passes through the vehicle's ventilation system. It is the first automotive cabin air filter to not only filter contaminants like road dust and pollen, but also absorb odors using the power of Arm & Hammer baking soda.

"Arm & Hammer baking soda has been a trusted product for eliminating odors in the home for years. Now motorists can have that same protection in their cars," said Currie.

The FRAM Fresh Breeze cabin air filter features coverage for millions of vehicles on the road that come equipped with a cabin air filter, many of which can be installed in 15 minutes or less. Drivers can do it themselves with the simple step-by-step instructions provided or they can take it to their local repair shop.

"Research shows that many people aren't even aware that their vehicles may come equipped with a cabin air filter," said Currie. "Remembering to replace your vehicle's cabin air filter can make the hours you spend traveling much more enjoyable, for you and your family."

Did you know

100 bicycles can be produced for the same energy and resources it takes to build one medium-size automobile.

The earth takes between 5 and 10 million years to make one gallon of gasoline.

The average automobile uses one gallon of gasoline in about 22 minutes.

Burning one gallon of gasoline yields 22 pounds of carbon dioxide, the major greenhouse gas.

Every car annually emits its own weight in carbon dioxide.

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CAR CARE

How to check and add power steering fluid

If you have noticed increasingly difficult steering or shrieks from your power steering pump belt, it is time to check the level of your power steering fluid.

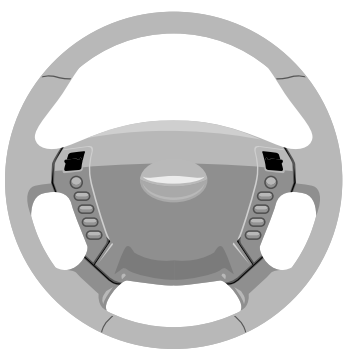
What You Will Need:
Your owner's manual

Power steering fluid (Check your owner's manual or ask your mechanic what type your vehicle needs-they there are many different varieties)

A funnel

A rag

DIFFICULTY LEVEL:
EASY



Step 1: Check your owner's manual to find whether your vehicle is recommended to be checked while warm or cold. Most manufacturers' recommend checking the power steering fluid while the engine is warm. If your car has not been running, let it idle for around five minutes or drive it around the block to warm the fluids. If the weather is especially cold, please allow appropriate warm up time to ensure an accurate reading.

Step 2: Open your hood and locate the tank for the power steering fluid. First locate your power steering pump. This is a belt driven pump towards the front of your engine bay. The tank may either be attached to the pump or close by, and it may be clear plastic or metal. The cap may be labeled "Power Steering Fluid".

Step 3: Open the tank by either unscrewing the cap or popping it off. Be sure not to lose this cap; place is somewhere safe nearby while you finish the service. If it has an attached dipstick, you will need it to determine your fluid level.

Step 4: Check the fluid level. If your tank is plastic, there may be full and low indicator levels written on the outside; usually these types of tanks are clear plastic so that you can clearly see the level of liquid inside and determine what level is present. If your tank is opaque plastic or metal, there may be a dipstick attached to the cap or the tank. If you have a dipstick, wipe the dipstick off on the rag and reinsert it into the tank. Pull the dipstick out again; the fluid will cover the dipstick up to the fill level present in your tank.

Step 5: If needed, add power steering fluid, using the funnel so as not to spill. Be sure only to fill to the "full" indicator line, DO NOT OVERFILL. If you have a dipstick, add a small amount and replace dipstick to re-measure level. Continue to add fluid and reinsert dipstick until "full" level is reached.

Step 6: Replace the tank cap; make sure it is secure either by tightly screwing or firmly pushing back on, Be aware of how low the level of this fluid is and how frequently you have to refill or notice symptoms of low fluid. As your vehicle does not "use up" power steering fluid as it does gasoline, low levels indicate a hose leak or leaks around seals.

If a leak is suspected, visit your auto mechanic or technician immediately.

When your car says, 'Wash me, please'

(NAPSI) — It's definitely time to clean your car when someone writes "wash me" on the surface.

Even if your car hasn't reached that point, a good cleaning of the inside and outside prevents the build-up of damaging chemicals and dirt, reduces the potential for rust from road salt and helps ensure the visibility needed for safe driving, according to the Car Care Council.

The first step is to remove the clutter from inside the car, including items that have accumulated in the trunk that can add extra weight and reduce gas mileage. Once this is done, thoroughly clean and vacuum the inside and wash the windows. When washing the outside, make sure to include the tires, wheels and the underside of the fenders to eliminate any road salt or grime. The Council recommends cleaning the wheels and tires with a mitt and using a separate mitt to wash the body. This will avoid contaminating the vehicle's paint with debris from the wheels and tires.

The body of the vehicle should be washed using a product sold specifically for cars. Starting at the top, wash one section at a time, thoroughly rinsing away the soap as you go.

Work your way down toward the front, sides and rear of the vehicle. Clean the fenders and bumpers last, since they will have the most dirt and grime that can contaminate the wash mitt.

The car should get a final rinse by removing the spray nozzle from the hose and letting the water cascade down the surfaces of the vehicle. To avoid water spots, dry the vehicle with a chamois or other product made for drying.

The last step is to wax the car according to the manufacturer's instructions for application. Waxing should be done out of direct sunlight and every six months. It goes a long way toward protecting the vehicle's finish and makes subsequent washes easier.

If you identify any stone chips, rust or other problem spots while washing your vehicle, the Council suggests having these taken care of immediately to prevent further damage.

Keeping your vehicle clean not only protects your valuable investment, it can foster a sense of pride and accomplishment. It's a task that takes very little money or effort, but has huge returns.

Easy maintenance tips to improve gas mileage

(NewsUSA) — When gas prices rise, Americans start feeling a pinch where it hurts — in their pocketbooks. But gas prices are no reason to stay home. AAA has some useful tips to help maximize your vehicle's fuel efficiency.

First, perform basic vehicle checks that will help maximize your miles per gallon:

• Check your air filter twice a year. A dirty filter reduces performance and increases fuel consumption.

• Check your tires monthly, and inflate to the recommended pressure. Under-inflated tires not only increase fuel use, they are a safety hazard. Second, listen when your vehicle tells you something is wrong. Take your car in for service right away if you experience:

• Engine bucking, surging, stalling, misfire or poor performance. These symptoms indicate a problem that is wasting fuel.

• The "check engine" light comes on. This means exhaust emissions are too high and fuel economy is too low.

Third, consult your owner's manual for the recommended maintenance needed to keep your vehicle running efficiently. Have those services performed by a shop with certified technicians who can spot other problems that may affect fuel consumption.

Looking for a good shop? Visit the automotive page of AAA.com to find local AAA Approved Auto Repair facilities that meet and maintain high standards.

Finally, AAA reminds motorists that how you drive has the single greatest impact on how much fuel your vehicle burns. Fuel-saving habits to consider include:

• Maintaining a steady speed. Cars require extra fuel when they accelerate, so avoid quick starts and stops that waste gas and are harder on vehicle components.

• Lightening your load. Don't haul unneeded items in your vehicle; their added weight will increase fuel use.

• Traveling at moderate highway speeds. Higher speeds require more power and fuel to overcome air resistance.

• Using the air conditioner conservatively. Air conditioning requires lots of power. In cool weather around town, turn the air conditioner off, and open your windows. In hot weather or on the highway, set the air conditioning to a higher temperature. Where available, use "economy" or "recirculation" settings to reduce air conditioner operation and minimize the amount of hot outside air that must be cooled.

Fix that windshield chip yourself

(MS) — It happens without warning. You're driving down the road and suddenly a stone hits your windshield. Now you have a potential safety issue on your hands that needs to be taken care of immediately. The initial damage, which may appear in the form of a bull's-eye, chip, or star on the glass, can be easily fixed. But, if left unrepaired, this small fracture will be expanded by vibration or changes in the temperature, creating a larger crack that may require a professional repair or even a new windshield replacement. So, unless you are able to get your insurance company to pick up the tab, you could be looking at a repair bill anywhere from $50 to 800.

The good news is you can fix a windshield chip yourself for about $10, and you don't have to have to take your car to a shop.

Permatex® has developed a special Windshield Repair Kit that fills in the ding, stops the damage from spreading, and helps to minimize the blemish on the glass. The kit comes complete with everything needed to make a permanent, professional-quality repair in minutes, including easy-to-follow instructions with step-by-step photos. To see how simple the kit is to use, check out Permatex's how-to demo video online at: www.permatex.com/videos/video_windshield_eng.html

So, whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or a pro, you can repair a windshield chip without the need for special tools or training. You should be able to get Permatex's Windshield Repair Kit at leading auto parts stores. If not, you can contact Permatex directly at 877-376-2839 or go to www.permatex.com to find a retailer near you.

How to a avoid a summer breakdown

(NewsUSA) — Summer's heat and stop-and-go traffic can cause poorly functioning automotive systems to fail outright.

To prevent vacation-ruining breakdowns, the experts at the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence offer the following tips on getting your vehicle ready for summer:

• Read the owner's manual and follow the recommended service schedules.

• Flush and refill the cooling system according to the service manual's recommendations. The level, condition and concentration of the coolant should be checked periodically. Let the engine cool down before removing the radiator cap.

• Have drivability problems, such as hard starts, rough idling and stalling, corrected.

• Ask a qualified auto technician to check the tightness and condition of belts, clamps and hoses.

• Have a marginally operating air conditioner system serviced by a qualified technician.

• Change the oil and oil filter as specified in the owner's manual. Replace other filters as recommended.

• Check the condition of tires, including the spare. Let tires cool down before checking air pressure.

• Inspect all lights and bulbs; replace burned-out bulbs.

• Replace worn wiper blades and keep plenty of washer solvent on hand to fight summer's dust and insects.

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